Ordained

A

SERMON.

DELIVERED AT

SEDGWICK,

MAY 15, 1805,

AT THE ORDINATION OF

The Rev. DANIEL MERRILL,

TO THE

PASTORAL CHARGE

OF THE

Baptiſt Church of Chriſt in that Place.

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1805.

SERMON.

JUDE, verſe 3.

EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

NOTHING is dearer to the heart of a good man than truth. For the attainment of this, he gives up every other gratification, and counts the ſacrifice ſmall. It is poſſible that from intereſted views ſome may attempt to deceive others; yet few will acknowledge that they are willing themſelves to be deceived. Conſcious of that reſpect which truth always commands, hypocriſy ſeldom ventures abroad in the light without aſſuming its ſacred garb. And even the deluded fanatic, whoſe ſyſtem is a mere complication of errors, in the wildeſt ravings of his unhallowed zeal will tell you, truth is his object. Error in every ſhape is always at war with truth: But it muſt waſte its ſtrength in vain; it can never overthrow it; for *the word of the Lord will endure forever.*

Nothing has a greater tendency to promote the peace and proſperity of the church of Chriſt than a ſtrict adherence to truth. Hence moſt of the inſpired writers have cautioned us againſt the ſmalleſt departure from it. It was foretold that falſe Chriſts and falſe prophets ſhould ariſe. That there ſhould be a departure from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits and doctrines of

devils. That the time would come when men would not endure ſound doctrine, but would turn away their ears from the truth, and ſhould be turned unto fables.

Looking forward to theſe times of apoſtaſy, and with a view to preſerve entire every part of Chriſtian doctrine and practice, the apoſtle Jude delivered the exhortation in our text. "Beloved," ſaid he, "when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common ſalvation; it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye ſhould *earneſtly contend for the faith once delivered to the ſaints.*"

By the faith once delivered to the ſaints we are undoubtedly to underſtand the entire ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and enforced by their example. If the exhortation in the text be applicable to Chriſtians in general, it is ſpecially ſo to the miniſters of Chriſt, *who are ſet for the defence of the goſpel.* It will be allowed that public teachers have great influence in forming the ſentiments and practice of their hearers. Hence *their lips ſhould preſerve knowledge, ſo that the people* may not be miſled, *who ſeek the law at their mouths.* If theſe obſervations are juſt, the ſentiments naturally ſuggeſted by the paſſage firſt read will not appear inapplicable to the preſent occaſion. We ſhall therefore conſider the language of the text, as ſpecially addreſſed to every miniſter of Chriſt, exhorting him *earneſtly to contend for the faith once delivered to the ſaints.*

In order more fully to elucidate the ſubject, we ſhall attempt,

Firſt, Briefly to conſider ſome of the leading ſentiments included in this faith.

Secondly, Show in what way the miniſters of Chriſt ought to contend for it. And,

Thirdly, We ſhall offer ſome arguments in ſupport of the duty.

Conformably to this arrangement, we proceed to conſider ſome of the leading ſentiments of the faith mentioned in the text.

1. The exhibition of Jeſus Chriſt as the true Meſſiah evidently forms a principal branch of apoſtolic preaching. Indeed this may be conſidered as the chief corner-ſtone in the Chriſtian ſyſtem; as the very foundation of the New-Teſtament diſpenſation.

To the Jews, the apoſtles endeavoured to prove from their ſcriptures that Jeſus was the very Meſſiah foretold by their prophets. This was following the example of their Maſter, who directed them to *ſearch the ſcriptures, for in them*, ſaid he, *ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that teſtify of me.* Had they followed their prophecies, they would as infallibly have led them to Jeſus, as the converging rays of a circle lead us to its centre.

The evidence of Chriſt's Meſſiahſhip when he tabernacled in clay, was too plain to be doubted by any honeſt mind. When he was at Jeruſalem at the feaſt of tabernacles, and went up into the temple and taught, his doctrine dropped as the rain, and his ſpeech diſtilled upon his people like the gentle dew; while his reaſonings convinced many of his enemies, and led them to aſk, "*Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Chriſt.*"*

The firſt preaching after the aſcenſion of Chriſt was on the day of Pentecoſt. The grand theme of this diſcourſe was a crucified, riſen Saviour. Peter, after proving that David in the 16th Pſalm ſpake prophetically of Chriſt, adds, *Therefore let all the houſe of Iſrael know aſſuredly, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom ye have crucified, both* LORD AND CHRIST. He bore the ſame decided teſtimony to the Jewiſh rulers, when examined concerning the man who had been healed at the gate of the temple. He declared that this miracle had been

* John vii. 26.

wrought by the power of Jeſus, whom they had crucified; and that he was the HOLY AND JUST ONE, whom they had denied; yea, moreover, that he whom they had killed was the very PRINCE OF LIFE.

When the diſciples were all ſcattered abroad on account of the perſecution of Stephen, Philip went down to Samaria *and preached Chriſt to them.* This chapter alſo furniſhes us with another ſermon from this ſame preacher, delivered to a ſmall company in a chariot. His text was taken from Iſaiah liii. 7, 8. "He was led as a ſheep to the ſlaughter, and like a lamb before his ſhearer, ſo he opened not his mouth." This text was propoſed by the Ethiopian eunuch, who wiſhed to be informed, whether the prophet ſpake this of himſelf or of ſome other man? "And Philip opened his mouth, and began at the ſame ſcripture, *and preached unto him JESUS.*"

The converſion of Saul to the church of Chriſt was one of the moſt intereſting events of that day. To have had ſuch a bold, active perſecutor ſilenced, by being gained over to the ſide of Chriſtianity, muſt have cauſed great joy. If viewed only as a man of learning, and influence, it would have been conſidered a great acquiſition to the church. But what rendered this event more intereſting than all other circumſtances taken together, was, that he was divinely commiſſioned *to preach among the Gentiles the unſearchable riches of CHRIST.*

It will be remembered, that when Jeſus met Saul in his way to Damaſcus, there was a light above the brightneſs of the ſun, which not only brought him to the ground, but entirely overpowered the organs of ſight; ſo that he could not find the way to the city without being led by the hand. No wonder that John, in his deſcription of heaven, ſhould ſay *there is no night there.* There can be none where Jeſus is. The heavenly city

has no need of the ſun, neither of the moon to ſhine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. This light is too intenſely glorious even for the ſaints to behold while they dwell in houſes of clay.

But to return from this digreſſion. Saul was three days without ſight; during the whole of which time he faſted. At length Ananias, directed by a viſion, entered the houſe, and, putting his hands upon him, thus addreſſed him: *Brother Saul, the Lord, (even Jeſus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou cameſt) hath ſent me that thou mighteſt receive thy ſight and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt*—*and he received ſight forthwith, and aroſe and was baptized.* Had Feſtus been there, I am aware he would have cried out as upon another occaſion, *Paul, thou art beſide thyſelf!* What, determined to be baptized before you take any refreſhment for your body, when you have neither ate nor drank for three days! ſurely mercy is before ſacrifice! But may we not ſuppoſe Paul to have anſwered with the ſame magnanimity as on a former occaſion, *I am not mad, moſt noble Feſtus;* but eſteem it my immediate, indiſpenſable duty, to teſtify my love to that bleſſed Saviour whom I have been ſo long oppoſing and perſecuting. It is now my meat and drink to do his will.

Having thus openly profeſſed himſelf a diſciple of Jeſus, we are told, *ſtraightway he preached Chriſt in the ſynagogues, that he is the* SON OF GOD. Remark, my brethren, the ſubject matter of his preaching. It was Chriſt the divine Saviour, Chriſt the Son of God; maintaining his proper deity, that he was the *true God and eternal life.* That this doctrine met with oppoſition will not be denied; but it is added, that "Saul increaſed the more in ſtrength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damaſcus, *proving that this is* VERY CHRIST."*

* Acts ix. 17—22.

These instances are sufficient to show, that exhibiting Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, was a leading and important article in *the faith once delivered to the saints*. Although the preaching of the cross was deemed by the learned Greeks foolishness, and to the self-righteous Jews a stumbling-block, it was the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to every one who believed. Paul was determined to know nothing among the Corinthians save Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is the only preaching that has ever savingly benefited mankind. Preach, my brethren, what we may, if the character of Jesus Christ as a Divine Saviour is left out, our hearers have a right to complain as a pious woman once did, *Ye have taken away my Lord, and I know not where ye have laid him.*

A sermon, as a mere piece of composition, may display much taste, and may be enriched, and even loaded with all "the lumber of a learned world;" yet if Christ be left out, the main thing will be wanting. There will be nothing to satisfy a hungry immortal soul. Christ, in all the glory of his character, must be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, or all our preaching will be in vain; nay, worse than in vain; for it will only tend to deceive and harden those who are looking to us for instruction. How awful the account, which the unfaithful minister will have to render up at the last day!

But are the dispositions of men so friendly to the gospel, that nothing more is necessary to their becoming real Christians, than to hold up Christ to them? Alas! it must be acknowledged, that vast numbers still remain in unbelief, who nevertheless sit under a faithful dispensation of the gospel.

This brings us to notice

2. That the gospel must not only be faithfully preached, but, in order to its becoming effectual, it must be accompanied with the Holy Ghost sent

down from heaven. The neceſſity of the influence of the Holy Spirit to convert the ſinner, is therefore to be conſidered as a part of *the faith once delivered to the ſaints.* For the converſion of the ſinner never was, nor ever will be effected by any other means. The eloquence of a *Cicero*, or the fire of a *Demoſthenes*, though they may affect the paſſions, can never change the heart. It is *not by* human *might nor power, but by my Spirit, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.** The fact is, *the hearts of the ſons of men are fully ſet in them to do evil.* To this they are wiſe, but to do good they have no underſtanding.

Nothing renders divine influence neceſſary to the converſion of a ſinner, but the fixed oppoſition of his heart. The goſpel carries ample evidence with it, to ſupport its divine originality. Nor is there any want of capacity in the ſinner either to underſtand, or to receive it. The difficulty lies wholly in the moral taſte of his heart. This perverſe taſte is what blinds the underſtanding, renders the will obſtinate, and leads all the affections of the ſoul after ſinful and forbidden objects. Until this diſordered taſte is rectified, men have no reliſh for the truth. This is fully expreſſed in the following ſolemn declaration made by Chriſt himſelf. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men *loved* darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil."† That is, they loved and reliſhed the darkneſs of ſin and ſinful pleaſures, better than the light of holineſs and ſalvation. Knowing the entire influence of this perverſe temper, Jeſus ſaid, *Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.*‡

But it may be aſked, Can blame be fairly attached to the ſinner's character for not believing the goſpel, if we admit that divine influence is neceſſary to bring him to believe? If he is not to blame, we ought to become his advocates, and

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endeavour to have him honourably acquitted. But in order to determine this point correctly, let us keep in mind the ſtatement made above, i. e. that nothing renders divine influence neceſſary but the perverſeneſs of the heart. And are men not to blame for the wickedneſs of their hearts? If they are not, they are not to blame for any thing: For all the ſins they were ever guilty of proceeded from this ſource. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies."* Let this fountain be cleanſed, and the ſtreams will become pure.

The want of light in the underſtanding is never imputed as a crime, where it does not ariſe from the *blindneſs of the* HEART.† A man whoſe intellectual powers bear no proportion to a Newton's, can never be blamed for not comprehending the laws of nature, and the various properties of matter, to the ſame extent as Newton did; but it is eaſy to ſee, that he is equally blameable for not loving God with all the faculties he poſſeſſes, as a Newton, or even an angel would be for not loving him with all theirs.

If in order to invalidate this reaſoning, and to form an excuſe for remaining impenitent, it ſhould be urged, that Chriſt has ſaid, *No man can come to me, except the Father who ſent me draw him;* I reply, Coming to Chriſt is believing on him; and if men cannot believe on him, there muſt be ſome reaſon why they cannot. If the difficulty ariſes from natural or intellectual inability, or from the want of ſufficient evidence of Chriſt's true character, it will remove the blame entirely from the ſinner. If this were really the caſe, it would be only neceſſary to exhibit light to the mind, and increaſe the evidence of truth to a degree proper to produce conviction, and the change would be effected. But ſo long as the heart retains its enmity to God,

* Matt. xv. 19. † Eph. iv. 8.

its love of darkneſs and hatred of light, it *cannot* come to Chriſt. It muſt be allowed that our Lord had the moſt perfect knowledge of the human heart: He ſaw all the latent ſprings of depravity in the ſoul, which rendered all its faculties completely oppoſed to his holy character. From this oppoſition of the heart to the holy nature of the goſpel, and from this alone, ariſes all that inability mentioned in the above paſſage, and which ſinners plead as an excuſe for not embracing the Saviour. No reaſon has ever yet been diſcovered why ſinners *cannot* come to Chriſt, only becauſe they *will not*.

It is one branch of the office work of the Holy Spirit therefore to remove this oppoſition, and make men willing to be ſaved by grace alone. Hence it is ſaid, "thy people ſhall be *willing* in the day of thy power."* When men are made willing to be ſaved upon the plan of pure mercy, there is then little difficulty remaining. It is only under the powerful operations of the Spirit of God that ſinners are made willing to relinquiſh their own righteouſneſs, to drop their weapons of rebellion, and make the mercy of God their final refuge.

Under theſe impreſſions, the ſoul is brought to ſubſcribe to the juſtice of God; and to acknowledge that that law, to which it had been ſo unreaſonably oppoſed, and which it had ſo often violated, reſulted wholly from the infinite benevolence of the Deity. He ſubſcribes with the apoſtle, that *the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and juſt, and good.*†

This temper of heart is the only ſource from whence true repentance ſprings. So long as there is a ſingle objection in the mind to the righteouſneſs and equity of the law, there can be no real ſorrow for having violated it. But what pangs of grief muſt rend the heart of the poor ſinner,

* Pſa. cx. 3. † Rom. vii. 12.

when he is brought to feel that he has been ſinning againſt a God of infinite love and mercy, and offending againſt the beſt of beings! That he has been conſtantly abuſing his beſt friend and benefactor! When the heart is humbled and brought to a right temper, it is impoſſible but it ſhould repent. *A broken and contrite heart* will continually mourn for ſin, as committed againſt a holy God.

Nor is it any more difficult now to love God, than it was before to hate him. The divine character appears ſo infinitely lovely to the renewed ſoul, that it cannot help loving it. That Saviour, who but a little time ſince appeared like a root out of a dry ground, without form or comelineſs, now appears altogether lovely, and the chief among ten thouſand. The heart is ſweetly drawn to Chriſt; and yet it flies to him willingly, as if it were not drawn. Loſt in pleaſing wonder and adoring aſtoniſhment, the ſoul exclaims in rapture, *I have found him of whom Moſes in the law, and the prophets did write, Jeſus of Nazareth! This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jeruſalem!* O here is ſafety. Yes, here I can reſt my eternal all. This is happineſs which I never knew before, and which a ſtranger intermeddles not with. What a ſtrange inſignificancy ſeems to be inſcribed on every mortal joy, when I can ſay with humble confidence, Chriſt is mine. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I deſire beſide thee.* Amazing condeſcenſion! Wonderful love! Can it be that the Lord of life and glory ſhould bleed on Calvary for me? That the bleſſed Jeſus ſhould conſent to be *bruiſed for my tranſgreſſions*, and *bear my ſins in his own body on the tree!* Henceforth let my heart be indifferent to every thing below the ſkies, and Chriſt be all and in all to my ſoul.

But what has produced this wonderful change in the ſoul? Has it been brought about by the mere efforts of deprayed nature? Surely no. De-

pravity will account for its former oppoſition; but its preſent ſtate is owing entirely to the riches of free, ſovereign grace. It was grace that firſt awakened the attention; that produced the firſt motions in the heart towards God. It is grace that carries on the work in every ſtage of it, until the *head-ſtone ſhall be brought forth with ſhouting, Grace! grace unto it.** *Jeſus*, operating by the power of the Holy Spirit, is *the author and finiſher of our faith.*

But it may be aſked, Does not the Spirit of God operate upon all men in ſuch a manner, that if they were only willing to yield to its motions they might become Chriſtians? This queſtion I have no doubt will appear rather ſingular to ſome; but I have no claim to the honour of inventing it; for it is evidently of *Arminian manufacture.* But ſhould we even admit this, yet ſtill it leaves the difficulty juſt where we found it. There was nothing but this unwillingneſs that prevented the ſinner's believing without the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit; and if this unwillingneſs ſtill remains in full force, what has this *general influence* of the Spirit produced? It is a fact that cannot be denied, that under the ſame diſpenſation of the goſpel ſome men believe, and others do not. We ſee the goſpel produceth different effects upon ſome, from what it does upon others. There muſt be a *cauſe.* It is an eſtabliſhed principle, that every effect has a cauſe, and that cauſe muſt be ſufficient to produce it. An inadequate cauſe can never be the true one. The cauſe why one ſinner repents and believes the goſpel rather than another, muſt either be from himſelf, or from ſome power which acts upon him. If the former, it will appear either that he had more power than the ſinner who ſtill remains in unbelief, or that he was not ſo unwilling to believe. In either caſe all *boaſting is not excluded.* At leaſt he may boaſt a

* Zech. iv. 7.

little modeſtly as the Phariſee did, who "*thanked God* that he was not like other men."

Are there any Chriſtians in this aſſembly who will preſume to ſay, that there was any thing in them, or any thing done by them, until renewed by ſovereign grace, which had the leaſt influence upon their ſalvation? Is it not your happineſs to acknowledge with the apoſtle, that it *is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.** And do you not believe that this divine operation in your hearts has been *according to the purpoſe of Him who worketh all things after the counſel of his own will.*†

The office work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the converſion of ſinners; but, agreeably to Chriſt's promiſe, he acts as a Comforter to the ſaints. This he does, by applying the precious promiſes of the goſpel to them under all their various trials; by imparting ſpiritual comfort to them from the word and ordinances; and alſo by witneſſing with their ſpirits that they are the children of God. It is by the Spirit's witneſſing their adoption, that they are enabled to cry, *Abba Father.*

It is under the influence of the Holy Spirit that the Chriſtian enjoys communion with God. This heavenly intercourſe is kept up entirely through the medium of the Spirit. He firſt excites ſpiritual deſires in the hearts of God's children, then indites their petitions for them, helps their infirmities, and maketh interceſſion for them according to the will of God.‡

Another branch of the office work of the Spirit is to *lead* the ſaints *into truth.* When Chriſt was about to leave his diſciples, he ſaid, "I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the *Spirit of truth,* whom the world cannot receive,

* Phil. ii. 13. † Eph. i. 11. ‡ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you." And "When he, the *Spirit of truth*, is come, he will guide you into all truth."*

This was by no means one of the leaſt bleſſings which Chriſt promiſed to his believing people: For without the teachings of the Holy Spirit we are always liable to run into error. "The natural man," however learned and wiſe, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are fooliſhneſs unto him: neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." It is alſo evident, that in forming their ſyſtems of religion, ſome good men, under the influence of certain prejudices, are led by their own fancies rather than by the Spirit of God. It cannot be ſuppoſed that the Holy Spirit ſhould lead one good man one way, and another directly oppoſite. Therefore the concluſion is plain, that where good men differ, one of them muſt always be in the wrong. As for inſtance: If the doctrine of ſovereign, diſcriminating grace, be true, i. e. that *God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*;† its oppoſite cannot be true. If our *ſalvation* be all of *grace*,‡ then it cannot be of works, neither in whole nor in part. Grace is not a principle inherent in man, but a favour freely beſtowed upon him. If it be true, *that God hath choſen us in him*, (i. e. in Chriſt) *before the foundation of the world, that we* SHOULD BE HOLY *and without blame before him in love*; then the Holy Spirit does not teach us, that we are choſen at the time of our converſion, and *then* becauſe *we are* already made holy. If we have *obtained an inheritance* in Chriſt, by *being predeſtinated acccording to the purpoſe of Him who worketh all things after the counſel of his own will*;§ then it is not true, that we obtained this inheritance by any act of our own, nor for any other reaſon than becauſe we

* John xiv. 16, 17, and xvi. 13. † Rom. ix. 18.
‡ Eph. ii. 8. § Eph. i. 4, 11.

were predeſtinated to it. If it be true, that the ſaints are *kept by the power of God, through faith unto ſalvation;** then it is not a dictate of the Holy Spirit, that they can fall away and miſs of ſalvation. If it be true, that all *who love Chriſt will keep his commandments*, then it follows, that the doctrine of the ſaints' perſeverance is not a licentious doctrine. For were we influeneed to keep Chriſt's commands from any other principle than love, our obedience would not be acceptable. We add once more; if it be true, that all who obey the goſpel have faith; but that *unreaſonable and wicked men have not faith*;† then it undeniably follows, that unreaſonable and wicked men do not *obey the goſpel*. And if ſuch as *obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and from the glory of his power*,‡ then it follows of neceſſity, that all men will not be ſaved in the *day of the Lord Jeſus*.

Believing theſe things to be according to the analogy of faith, *the faith once delivered to the ſaints*, we feel juſtified in contending earneſtly for and endeavouring to ſupport them.

We proceed to remark,

3. That the faith once delivered to the ſaints, when embraced under the influence of the Spirit, is always productive of holy obedience.

It would be uſeleſs to contend for any ſyſtem of faith, that did not improve the moral condition of man. We may juſtly conſider that religion vain, which conſiſts only in metaphyſical crudities, and cold ſpeculations; which can neither warm the affections nor influence the heart. Religion in the head has about the ſame influence upon a man, as the rays of the moon have upon the earth. It imparts a feeble light to the underſtanding, but never removes the coldneſs of the affections. But the truth received into the heart, is like the ſun ſhining in his ſtrength. It imparts

* 1 Pet. i. 5. † 1 Theſſ. iii. 2. ‡ i. 1, 8, 9.

both light and heat. It not only illumines our path, but warms, invigorates and renders fruitful all the powers of the ſoul.

The firſt viſible act of obedience produced by the faith mentioned in our text in the apoſtolic age, was an open profeſſion of Chriſt. On the day of Pentecoſt, *they that gladly received his word were baptized.* When the Samaritans *believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jeſus Chriſt, they were baptized both men and women. Criſpus, the chief ruler of the ſynagogue believed on the Lord with all his houſe. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.* This was *confeſſing Chriſt before men;* while ſuch as concealed their faith were conſidered as being aſhamed of him. Such as are aſhamed to own him in his inſtitutions, he threatens to diſown when he comes in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels.

Believing and being *baptized*, ſtand ſo cloſely connected, that they ſeem to be mentioned in the ſame breath. *Go ye, therefore*, ſaid the riſen Jeſus, *teach all nations, baptizing them. He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved.* Hence thoſe who contend for the faith as it was once delivered to the ſaints, will not depart from the primitive inſtitution in the ſmalleſt degree, nor give up this part of apoſtolic practice. Did the primitive Chriſtians think that they had done all that was required when they were baptized? No verily. But *they continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles' doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.* They were careful to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindneſs, and charity. Thoſe whom Chriſt called to contend for the faith, were careful to *teach their converts to obſerve all things whatſoever he had commanded them.* In all their preaching, and in all their epiſtles, they conſtantly urged ſuch as had

believed through grace, *to be careful to maintain good works.*

Having thus deſcribed ſome of the leading ideas contained in the faith mentioned in our text, I proceed to the SECOND head of diſcourſe, which was to ſhow in what way the miniſters of Chriſt ought to contend for this faith. *Earneſtly contend.* Emphatic as this expreſſion appears, we preſume it will be allowed by thoſe who underſtand the original, to be much qualified and ſoftened by the tranſlation.*

1. You will all no doubt agree with me, that miniſters ought to contend for it in all their public diſcourſes. We do not mean, however, by wrangling, nor by dogmatizing over their hearers' underſtandings, nor by lording it over God's heritage; but by holding up the truth as it is in Jeſus. Every miniſter ought to be a ſcribe well inſtructed in the principles and laws of the kingdom of Chriſt; and he ought to be firm and decided, never ſhunning to declare the whole counſel of God. That man muſt indeed act a perfidious part, who does not preach what he believes.

No one will deny, but a perſon may honeſtly believe what is not true, and contend for error with as much zeal as others do, or ought to do for the truth. But we ſhould do well, my brethren, to remember, that it is not how we ſhall be able to manage our cauſe, and whether we can keep our ground againſt our opponents; but whether we ſtand in the counſel of God, and that we are contending for nothing but truth. Or whether, by our traditions, we are not doing all in our power to make void the commandments of God.

* Επαγωνίζομαι, *Decertó.* Imports a hot and violent fight, an inſtant contention. Certamina propoſita, qualia ſunt inter Athletas, ſed compoſitio illuſtrior eſt, et ſignificat, certare cum ſummo ſtudio. Crit. Sacr.

There is ſomething exceedingly trying to our pride, to recede from ſentiments which we have profeſſed and acted upon. And indeed we ought not to change upon ſlight reaſons, if our ſentiments are the reſult of candid and prayerful examination. But when the ſun-beams of truth break in upon our conſciences, and with irreſiſtible influence diſſipate the fogs of error and tradition, our refuges fail us. Should we, after full conviction, travel on in a wrong courſe, our conduct would border upon that *rebellion which is as the ſin of witchcraft, and partake of that ſtubbornneſs which is as iniquity and idolatry.**

Every miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt who is actuated by a ſpirit of loyalty to his Maſter, will, regardleſs of conſequences, *contend earneſtly* for apoſtolic doctrine and practice; that the truth may be believed and that the *ordinances* may be kept as they were *firſt delivered* to the churches; and that *all things* in the Chriſtian temple *may be made according to the pattern ſhown in the mount.*

2. Miniſters ought not only to contend for the truth in their public diſcourſes, but to add the full weight of their practice and example. The pureſt principles always ſuffer in impure hands; above all others, they *who bear the veſſels of the Lord ought to be holy.* The leaſt appearance of fraud, art or cunning in the conduct of a miniſter will deſtroy the good effects of his teaching. If a reaſonable ſuſpicion can be entertained, that he is governed by ſiniſter or lucrative motives in *contending* for any particular mode or article of *faith*, it ought, and it will at once abate the force of his arguments, and render all his efforts uſeleſs.

The miniſter, as an under-ſhepherd, ſhould go before his flock, and invite them to *follow him as he follows Chriſt.* We can never underſtandingly follow Chriſt, but where he has marked the way. You will look carefully then, my brethren, when

* 1 Sam. xv. 23.

you think you are following Jeſus, and ſee if you can trace his ſteps. Be aſſured it will make infinite amends for all the reproach which we can ſuffer for his ſake in this preſent world, to have it ſaid of us at the laſt great day, *Theſe are they who follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth.**

3. Miniſters may lawfully, and ſometimes are called to, *contend for the faith once delivered to the ſaints*, by their pens. The author of our text found it expedient for him to *write* unto his brethren, and ſhow them the danger of departing from the primitive faith. Had he not left his exhortations in writing, they would never have reached us, and we ſhould have been deprived of the inſtructions they contain. I am ſenſible that a polemic divine is looked upon by many as a diſturber of the public tranquillity. But how was the glorious reformation from popery, ſo much ſpoken of by Proteſtants, effected? Was it not principally by the writings of Wickliff, Luther and others? A man's writings may travel many thouſands of miles beyond where himſelf can go; they may enlighten and comfort thouſands whom he may never ſee in the fleſh; and may live ages after he is dead.

I hope, however, I ſhall not be miſtaken as advocating the litigious, wrangling critic, who deals in low abuſe and vulgar ſlander; whoſe pen is always employed in ludicrous ſarcaſm, or dipt in gall. No; the faith oncè delivered to the ſaints needs no ſuch advocates as theſe. The Chriſtian warfare is not to be conducted with ſuch *carnal weapons*. The only method which affords a probability of ſucceſs, is that propoſed by Paul to Timothy; *In* MEEKNESS *inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.* It muſt be acknowledged that ſome men, who ſet themſelves

* Rev. xiv. 4.

up as reformers, do not treat thoſe who differ from them with ſo much decency as Michael the arch-angel did the devil. Although he contended and diſputed with his Satannic majeſty, it is ſaid *he durſt not bring againſt him a railing accuſation, but ſaid, the Lord rebuke thee.**

It is believed to be conſiſtent with the moſt amiable, Chriſt-like meekneſs, to contend for the faith; yea, to contend earneſtly for it, but not angrily. We cannot better expreſs our love to the dear Redeemer, than by cleaving to his cauſe, and by endeavouring to defend it againſt all oppoſition. I know there are ſome perſons who even conſider a ſentimental Chriſtian as a bigot; and will charge him with a want of catholiciſm if he will not allow every other man to be as right as himſelf. But a faithful miniſter of Chriſt will ſet little by that catholiciſm which muſt be ſupported at the expenſe of truth.

On the whole, the exhortation in our text places us on high and reſponſible ground, and ſolemnly charges us not to give up a ſingle point of truth, neither in ſentiment nor practice.

We proceed briefly in the THIRD, and laſt place, to offer ſome arguments in ſupport of the duty.

Our firſt argument ariſes from the nature and excellency of truth. If the faith mentioned in our text includes the entire ſyſtem of Chriſtianity; and if this ſyſtem is complete in all its parts, both as it reſpects doctrine and practice; if it ſecures in the beſt manner the divine honour and the happineſs of all who embrace it; then nothing can be given up, or added to it, without marring its beauty and uſefulneſs. The Lord charged the children of Iſrael by Moſes, ſaying, "Ye ſhall not *add* unto the word which I command you, neither ſhall ye *diminiſh* aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."† You will obſerve, my

* Jude, verſe 9. † Deut. iv. 2.

brethren, that it totally alters the nature of our obedience if we *add to*, or *diminiſh from*, God's commands. In this caſe our obedience, at leaſt in part, is offered to ſomething that is not God's. Add thou not unto his words, leſt he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*

A ſecond argument may be drawn in favour of the duty from the different effects produced by truth and error. Error always partakes of the nature of falſehood, and requires the ſame kind of management to give it currency. If a man tell a falſehood, he is generally obliged to tell a ſecond to ſupport the firſt, and a third to ſupport the ſecond, and ſo on. If we embrace one error, it requires a number more to uphold and defend that one; for truth can afford it no ſupport, nor receive any from it. To this ſource we may trace all the perſecutions which have ever waſted the church of God. True religion, like its Divine Author, is "meek and lowly," and never partakes of that ferocious ſpirit. To this, ſuperſtition, fanaticiſm and infidelity, all owe their exiſtence. The *Man of Sin*, the *Beaſt*, and the *Falſe Prophet*, are all the offspring of error. It is impoſſible that error ſhould give the ſame ſupport and conſolation to the mind which are derived from truth. Its joys cannot be equally ſolid and permanent.

That a great variety of opinions prevail among profeſſing Chriſtians will not be denied. But to ſuppoſe them all equally free from error, and ſo all alike good, would be highly abſurd. If there be a right way, it is important for us all to know it. If God has revealed his will with ſufficient clearneſs to meet our capacities, it muſt be our own fault if we do not receive and practiſe it.

The more our ſentiments, our hearts, and our lives are conformed to truth, the more perfect and permanent will our joy be. If we were perfectly

* Prov. xxx. 6.

conformed, we ſhould be perfectly happy. *Then ſhall I be ſatisfied when I awake in thy likeneſs.*

We argue, thirdly, in favour of *contending for the faith of the goſpel*, from a conſideration of the *divine glory*. It is in receiving and obeying the truth that we glorify God. Every degree of error which we admit, either in ſentiment or practice, derogates from the divine honour. Can we ſuppoſe God will account himſelf honoured by the moſt ſplendid offerings, if they are not ſtamped with his own authority? In vain do we reſerve the *beſt of the ſheep and oxen* to do ſacrifice to the Lord, if in doing it we neglect or violate a poſitive command. *To obey is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

The great end of all our conduct ought to be to glorify God. The ſmalleſt known departure from the faith under conſideration, is a high reflection either upon his wiſdom or goodneſs. If what he has declared be true, we ought to believe it; and if what he has commanded be right and fit, we certainly ought to obey him.

The infinite Jehovah has guarded the honours of his own character with the moſt ſolemn ſanctions. Read at your leiſure that awful catalogue of curſes in the 28th of Deuteronomy, pronounced againſt the man who ſhould dare trifle with Divine Authority. By the laſt of the Jewiſh prophets, God complained of that people, ſaying, *From the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.** Here is both reproof and encouragement. Nor was the bleſſed Saviour leſs deciſive, when the Phariſees charged his diſciples with a want of due reſpect for the traditions of their elders; for after quoting a ſevere reproof from the prophecy of Iſaiah, he adds, *Howbeit in vain do they worſhip me,*

* Mal. iii. 7.

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men. He subjoins, seemingly with great emphasis, *FULL WELL YE REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR OWN TRADITION.**

Do not arguments the most powerful arise from such considerations as these, to animate us to contend earnestly for the faith of the gospel, that it may be preserved in apostolic purity?

A fourth argument, and which appears of great weight to the speaker, arises from the particular state of religion at this time. It is a day of God's power: an unusual season of merciful visitation. Thousands and thousands are asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. How important at such a season, that they should be *taught the way of the Lord perfectly.* They will not be likely to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God our Saviour*, unless fed with the *sincere milk of the word.* While the faithful ministers of Christ are endeavouring to disseminate the pure gospel, there are not wanting those who are infusing the poison of error.

The doctrine of *sovereign grace* is assailed from every quarter. Many who are *antipodes* in other respects, as cheerfully agree in this opposition as Pilate and Herod did in crucifying Christ. They seem determined, if God will not allow them the *sovereign right to dispose of themselves* as they please, to

> "Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod;
> "Re-judge his justice; be the God of God!

Some appear to be so infatuated with the proud thoughts of having their salvation in their own hands, that it would seem as if they had concluded, that if God would only be so good as to let them alone, and not *elect* them before they believe, they should have no doubt of being saved.

* Mark vii. 7—9.

Others there are who deny the Supreme Deity of Jeſus Chriſt, and refuſe to *honour the Son* as they profeſs to honour the Father. If they are right, my brethren, we are wrong. If they render ſuitable honours to the Saviour of the world, it is evident we give him more than is his due. We certainly adore him in a higher ſenſe than they do. Several other important ſentiments ſtand in cloſe connexion with this; ſuch as, the atonement of Chriſt, the work of the Holy Spirit, the neceſſity of a change of heart, &c. No perſon of diſcernment, who has ever attended on the preaching of Arians and Socinians, but muſt have obſerved a great difference between them and us on theſe points. How extremely guarded and cautious are they when ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt, leſt they ſhould drop a word that might be conſtrued into an acknowledgment of his Supreme Deity! Whilſt we, my brethren, pour forth our ſouls in undiſſembled praiſe *to Him that loved us and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood*:* to Him who bears the government of the univerſe upon his ſhoulder; whoſe name, whether of Emanuel, Jeſus or Saviour, is to us indeed *Wonderful;* and whom we adore as *Counſellor, the Mighty God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.*†

There are others whom we love in the truth, and eſteem as our brethren in Chriſt. With many of them we ſee eye to eye in all the great leading doctrines of the goſpel: but we are prevented carrying our Chriſtian love into general practice, from our diſagreement in one of the poſitive inſtitutions of Chriſt. This inſtitution, in our be-

* Rev. i. 5.

† Iſa. ix. 6. The Hebrew words אבי עד, ate, by ſeveral good critics, rendered *Pater æternitatis*. What more exalted idea can we poſſibly form of our glorious Saviour than to view him, not only as eternal, but the very *Father of Eternity?*

lief, has a prior claim of all others upon the obedience of every convert; and is by the example of the Apoſtolic Church made a pre-requiſite to communion at the Lord's table.

It gives us real pain in being obliged to contend with ſuch as we eſteem good men, in this important point. But believing as we do, and ſupported as we are by the plaineſt conſtruction of the ſacred ſcriptures, (many of themſelves being judges,) can they juſtly blame us? We think they cannot.

If we love our brethren *in the truth*, and *for the truth's ſake which dwelleth in them*, then the more they poſſeſs of truth and the leſs of error, the more pure will our affection be.

Although it is mortifying to ſelf-importance to retract, yet, if by contending for the faith we can prevail on men to give up error for truth, we ſhall be amply rewarded for our labour, and they will richly profit by the exchange.

The argument under conſideration derives much ſtrength from the preſent ſtate of things. Many of thoſe obſtacles which, like the "infernal caſt," heretofore impeded the progreſs of truth, are now removed out of the way. We live in an age of free inquiry. The mind muſt have ſomething to reſt upon; and if men do not find the truth, they will make lies their refuge.

Other arguments might be adduced, but from thoſe which have been briefly ſtated, it is hoped that the friends to *pure* Chriſtianity will be animated to contend with becoming zeal for the precious faith of the goſpel. What more powerful motives can be urged than the glory of God, and the happineſs of our fellow men? Let us then, my brethren, not ſleep at ſuch a day as this; but while God is marvellouſly at work on the minds of men, let us be active and faithful, and in due time we ſhall reap if we faint not. Surely *our judgment is with the Lord, and our work with our God.*

If we contend in a becoming manner, in the ſpirit of the goſpel, we may confidently hope, that in the end we ſhall come off conquerors, through Him who hath loved and given himſelf for us. But I muſt not enlarge. A few words of addreſs muſt cloſe. The Paſtor elect claims our firſt attention.

Very dear Brother,

We have no doubt but you feel the full force of the exhortation in our text, and are determined to contend manfully for the apoſtolic faith. We know not what difficulties you may yet have to encounter; but from the preſent very pleaſing appearance of things in Sedgwick, it does not look as if you would have occaſion to complain as Paul did, that *after the manner of men he had fought with beaſts at Epheſus.* But, Sir, you will remember, that you will have to diſpute every inch of ground with thoſe who oppoſe themſelves to the truth. "For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood only, but againſt principalities and powers; againſt the *rulers* of the darkneſs of this world; againſt *ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places.* Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to ſtand in the evil day."*

You have, dear Sir, already ſeen the aſtoniſhing triumphs of truth in this place. Numbers at different periods have been converted from the error of their ways, and turned to the living God. You have alſo had the joy of ſoul to ſee many of your ſpiritual children walking in the truth. Nor has the hand of the Lord been leſs viſible in the late aſtoniſhing change of ſentiment among you with reſpect to one of the poſitive inſtitutions of the goſpel. It is not a rare thing to have Chriſtians, and even miniſters, from other communities come over to our ſentiments; but for a miniſter and a large majority of his church to come in a

* Eph. vi. 12, 13.

body is an almoſt unheard of event.* How great the goodneſs of God! You have not had occaſion to complain as St. Paul did, that *at his firſt anſwer no man ſtood with him, but all men forſook him.* Your brethren have gone hand in hand with you; and you appear ſtill happily united, both in ſentiment and affection. We pray God to increaſe your love to his precious cauſe, and to one another.

You will not expect, however, to get along without ſome croſſes and trials. Probably many of your old friends with whom you have been in the habits of intimacy will turn againſt you, for having embraced the apoſtolic mode of baptiſm. But you will have this peaceful reflection, that what you have done is the *anſwer of a good conſcience towards God.* If your old friends forſake you, you will find many new ones to make up their loſs. Should they be leſs reſpected by the world, we truſt they will not be leſs affectionate and ſincere.

It gives us real pleaſure that you have placed yourſelf among the advocates of primitive baptiſm.† Need we remind you of the Saviour's addreſs to Peter, "*When thou art converted, ſtrengthen thy brethren?*" Our fervent prayers are, that your efforts in defence of the goſpel baptiſm, that ſacred

* At a meeting of the Church legally notified, it was voted, without a diſſenting voice, to ſend for the preſent Council, &c.

† That I do not miſcall the baptiſm for which we contend, I appeal to Dr. Moſheim. "The ſacrament of baptiſm," ſays this excellent hiſtorian, "was adminiſtered in this (the firſt) century, without the public aſſemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpoſe, and was performed by IMMERSION OF THE WHOLE BODY IN THE BAPTISMAL FONT." Vol. i. p. 126. In his hiſtory of the ſecond century he adds, "The perſons that were to be baptized, after they had repeated the *Creed*, confeſſed and renounced their ſins, and particularly the *devil* in his pompous allurements, were *immerſed under water*, and received into Chriſt's kingdom, by a ſolemn invocation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, according to the expreſs command of our bleſſed Lord." Ibid p. 206.

inſtitute rendered ſo peculiarly dear by the example of our exalted Saviour, may prove a mean of conviction to thouſands of our fellow Chriſtians. Go on, dear Sir, and proſper, and the Lord be with you. Contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints; both as it reſpects doctrice and practice. Always bearing in mind, that a man *is not crowned except he ſtrive lawfully.* May *the eternal God be your refuge, and underneath* in all times of trouble, place *the everlaſting arms.* That your labours may long be continued with increaſing uſefulneſs; and that you may be the honoured inſtrument of turning many more to righteouſneſs, who, like ſhining ſtars, ſhall increaſe the luſtre of your crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jeſus, is the fervent wiſh of all our hearts.

This newly conſtituted Church will accept our affectionate congratulations.

Beloved in the Lord,

We had often anticipated the pleaſures of this interview before the time of our meeting arrived. And we were ſometimes ready to fear that we had overrated the ſatisfaction to be derived from it. But I believe I ſpeak the ſentiments of all my brethren, when I ſay, that our expectations have been fully realized. It has been a ſeaſon to us uncommonly ſolemn and precious. Have we not reaſon to believe the Lord has been with us of a truth? During the various ſervices, no unpleaſant circumſtance has occurred to mar our joy. But every thing has ſucceeded ſo entirely according to our wiſhes, that we feel conſtrained to ſay, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.*

But ſhould you hereafter meet with trials in purſuing your Chriſtian courſe, we truſt you will not be diſmayed at them, knowing that they will all be wiſely overruled by a covenant God for your good. Nor will you, dear brethren, indulge the thought, that when we are abſent from you,

we ſhall be unmindful of you: O no, be aſſured we ſhall not. The very affecting ſcene which we have witneſſed ſince we have been with you, has made an impreſſion upon our hearts that time can never eraſe. Our fervent prayer to God is, that you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; that your love to God, and to one another may continually increaſe and abound.

As you have now been *buried with Chriſt by baptiſm into death*, evidencing to the world that you have *put off the old man with his corrupt deeds*; ſo we hope you are *riſen through the faith of the operation of God, to walk in newneſs of life.**

Go on then, as you have begun, counting all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. Endeavour to ſtrengthen the hands of your dear Miniſter, that he may have occaſion to glory on your behalf. Whilſt you are *earneſtly contending for the faith*, be watchful over your own hearts, leſt at any time you indulge a wrong temper. Live the religion you profeſs. And at all times *let your converſation be as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt; that, whether we come and ſee you, or elſe be abſent, we may hear of your affairs, that you ſtand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel.*† We hope indeed often to hear from you, but think it very unlikely that we ſhall ever meet you again on the ſhores of time. No; the greater part of you, among whom we have been preaching and baptizing with ſo much pleaſure, will ſee our faces no more. But ſuppreſs your tears, dear brethren, we ſhall not always be ſeparated. A few rolling ſuns more, and we ſhall meet in Immanuel's land, never more to part. The Lord prepare us for the immortal glories and felicities of that ſtate, through Jeſus Chriſt, our only Saviour.

* Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12. † Phil. i. 27.

A few words to the congregation at large, and we ſhall cloſe.

Dear fellow men,

We hope many of you are Chriſtians; if ſo, remember that Chriſt has ſaid, *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Be careful that you contend for nothing but the faith once delivered to the ſaints. May every way which you attempt to take to run from your duty be hedged up, till you are willing to *follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth.*

But is it not to be feared, that many of you are to this moment unacquainted with religion. Have you ſpent your days without any ſaving knowledge of Chriſt? And are you ſtill determined to live in this careleſs ſtate, having no hope, and without God in the world? O ſinner, it is time to awake from your deluſive dreams. The chariot of ſalvation is rolling on! The ſaints are gathering in! The judgment day is approaching! The angel is preparing to ſwell the dreadful trump! Yet a little while, and he that comes, will come, and will not tarry, and his reward will be with him, to give to every man according to his works. The Lord grant that you may find mercy in that day, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be glory forever.——AMEN.

CHARGE,

BY THE REV. ABRAHAM CUMMINGS.

ABUNDANT matter of joy and gratitude have we, the members of this Council, that we can now addreſs you, dear Sir, as a baptized ordained miniſter of the goſpel, and paſtor of this flock of God, now viſibly born of water and of the Spirit. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

WE, therefore, CHARGE YOU, before God and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and dead at his coming, that you take heed to yourſelf to *continue* in the exerciſe of repentance, faith, love, and a conſtant courſe of ſelf-denial: That you continue the example of believers in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in unity. Be ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as you know, from the wonders of grace here which your eyes have ſeen, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Maintain a deep and abiding ſenſe of the apoſtaſy and miſery of man, and of the ſuperabounding mercy of God through Chriſt. This will ſweeetly influence you to preach the word with energy: to be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon: to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-ſuffering and doctrine. This doctrine muſt be pure by ſound ſpeech, which cannot be condemned: doctrine according to godlineſs; which exhibits the breadth of the divine law, the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, and the abſolute neceſſity of the atonement and righteouſneſs of Him who is

both divine and human; which lays proud man low at the foot of ſovereign mercy, and provokes to every exerciſe of practical piety.

Furniſhed with this rich treaſure, give to every one his portion. Apply the *dreadfuls* of the book of God to the careleſs and preſumptuous; the balm of promiſe to the broken heart. Feed the ſheep and lambs; the old and young in grace: Lead them beſide the living ſtreams: Speak to their inſtruction and conſolation. Uphold the true diſcipline of the church of God: for we are not called to uncleanneſs, but to holineſs. Bring not into his ſanctuary ſtrangers, uncircumciſed in heart and uncircumciſed in fleſh. The ſacraments of the New Teſtament are deſigned only for thoſe who are viſibly in the new covenant. Such are not the children of the fleſh, becauſe they are not viſibly ſuch as they cannot appear to be. This would be a ſoleciſm in language. That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

You need not be informed, bleſſed be God, that baptiſm is only another word for immerſion; repreſenting our death, burial and reſurrection with Chriſt, both in a ſpiritual and corporeal ſenſe. In this great employment let your profiting appear to all. Give yourſelf to reading, meditation and prayer, that you may be a ſcribe well inſtructed unto the kingdom of God, and bring out of your treaſure things new and old. Finally, the things now heard among many witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, that they may be able to teach others alſo.

And now, dear Sir, go forth once more againſt the uſurped empire of Satan, in the name of the Lord of Hoſts. Fear none of thoſe things which you may be called to ſuffer. You remember the armour of David, the ſling and the ſtone: the

weapons feeble, the conqueſt glorious. Our prayers go with you. The prayers of all God's dear people here go with you; and above all, the precious promiſe, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

May you return from this warfare laden with ſpoils, a multitude of precious ſouls for trophies of victory, and a crown of rejoicing in the preſence of the Lord Jeſus at his coming.——AMEN.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE REV. ELISHA WILLIAMS.

As the eye of the watchman or the weary mariner meets with joy the firſt dawn of light, after a cold and lengthy ſeaſon of darkneſs; much more doth the heart of the friend of Zion leap for joy, when he ſeeth her light breaking forth as the morning, and the glory of the Lord ariſing upon her. As huſbandmen rejoice at the proſpect of ſpring after a long and lifeleſs winter; greater reaſon have they who love the cauſe of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, mutually to congratulate each other when they ſee the proſperity of the church, and the inſtitutions of the goſpel duly reſpected and attended.

Not only words, but certain actions or geſtures are expreſſive of theſe mutual congratulations. The cuſtom in common life of giving a friend the right hand is expreſſive of common friendſhip. The cuſtom among the churches of Chriſt, of miniſters giving each other the right hand, on public ſolemnities like the preſent, is a viſible teſtimony of the communion of the churches; it indicates that miniſters are united under our common Lord, that they are ſtrongly bound to ſupport, encourage and animate one another by prayer and mutual aſſiſtance in the difficult and glorious work into which they have entered. To juſtify this cuſtom, we have the voice of ſcripture in the examples of the apoſtles, and the immemorial practice in the churches.

Therefore, in compliance with this cuſtom, and by the deſire of the Council here convened, and in teſtimony of our ſincerity in thus bidding you welcome as a labourer into the vineyard of our Lord, I now preſent you with this right hand. Receive it, dear Brother in the Lord, as a token of our Chriſtian and miniſterial fellowſhip with you; as an acknowledgment of our readineſs to afford you our beſt advice and aſſiſtance in your labours in the miniſtry, and that we will be as ready to receive as impart in thoſe labours. We wiſh you peace and proſperity. May you be a burning and ſhining light in the church of God: May you be a faithful and ſucceſsful miniſter; and when the Chief Shepherd ſhall appear, may you receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.